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SECTION FOUR

THE RIVER BOSS

By Stewart Edward White

"OBEY orders if you break owners," is a motto, but a really efficient river boss knows a better. It runs, "Get the logs out; get them out peaceably, if you can, but get them out." He needs no instructions from headquarters to tell him how to live up to this rule. That might involve headquarters.

Jimmy was such a river boss. Therefore when Mr. Daly of the firm of Morrison & Daly unexpectedly found himself contracted to deliver 5,000,000 feet of logs at a certain date, and the logs an impossible number of miles up stream, he called in Jimmy.

Jimmy was a small man, changeless as the Egyptian Sphinx. A number of years ago a French comic journal published a series of sketches supposed to represent the shah of Persia influenced by various emotion. Under each was an appropriate label, such as surprise, grief, anger or astonishment. The portraits were identically alike and uniformly impassive.

Well, that was Jimmy. He looked always the same. His hair, thick and black, grew low on his forehead; his beard, thick and black, mounted over the ridge of his cheek bones; and his eyebrows, thick and black, extended in an uninterrupted straight line from one temple to the other. Whatever his small, compact, muscular body might be doing, the mask of his black and white imperturbability remained always unchanged. Generally he sat clasping one knee, staring directly in front of him, and puffing regularly on a "meerschaum" pipe he had earned by saving the tags of Spearhead tobacco. Whatever you said to him sank without splash into this almost primal calm, and was lost to view forever. Perhaps after a time he might do something about it, but always without explanation, calmly, with the lofty inevitability of fate. In fact, he never explained himself even to his employers.

Daly swung his bulk back and forth in the office chair. Jimmy sat bold upright, his black hat pendent between his knees.

"I want you to take charge of the driving crew, Jimmy," said the big man. "I want you to drive those logs down to our boom as fast as you can. I give you about twenty days. It ought to be done in that. Sanders will keep time for you, and Merrill will cook. You can get a crew from the east branch, where the drive is just over."

When Daly had quite finished his remarks, Jimmy got up and went out without a word. Two days later he and sixty men were breaking rollways forty-five miles upstream.

Jimmy knew as well as Daly that the latter had given him a hard task. Twenty days was too brief a time. However, that was none of his business.

The logs, during the winter, had been piled in the bed of the stream. They extended over three miles of rollways. Jimmy and his crew began at the downstream end to tumble the big piles into the current. Sometimes only two or three of the logs would rattle down; at others the whole deck would bulge outward, hover for a moment and roar into the stream like grain from an elevator.

Shortly the narrows below the rollways jammed. Twelve men were detailed as the "jam crew." Their business was to keep the stream free in order that the constantly increasing supply from the roll-ways might not fill up the river. It was not an easy business, nor very safe.

As the "jam" strung out over more and more of the river, the jam crew was constantly recruited from the men on the roll-ways. Thus some of the logs, a very few, the luckiest, drifted into the dam pond at Grand Rapids within a few days; the bulk jammed and broke, and jammed again at a point a few miles below the roll-ways, while a large proportion stranded, plugged, caught and tangled at the very roll-ways themselves.

Jimmy had permitted himself two days in which to break out the roll-ways. It was done in two. Then the "rear" was started. Men in the rear crew had to see that every last log got into the current, and stayed there. When the jam broke, the middle of it shot down-stream in a most spectacular fashion, but along the banks "winged out" distressingly. Sometimes the heavy sticks of timber had been forced right out on the dry land. The rear crew lifted them back. When an obstinate log grounded they jumped cheerfully into the water—with the rotten ice swirling around them—and pried the thing off bottom. Between times they stood upright on single unstable logs and pushed mightily with poles while the ice water sucked in and out of their spiked river shoes.

As for the compensations. Naturally there was a good deal of rivalry as to which wing should advance fastest; and one experiences a certain physical thrill in venturing under thirty feet of jammed logs for the sole purpose of teasing the whole mass to cascade down on one; or of shooting a rapid while standing upright on a single timber. I believe, too, it is considered a mighty honor to belong to the rear crew. Still, the water is cold and the hours long, and you have to sleep in tents.

It readily can be seen that the progress of the rear measures the progress of the drive. Some few logs in the "jam" may run fifty miles a day—and often do drive may not have gained more than 1,000 yards. —but if the sacking has gone slowly at the rear, the Therefore, Jimmy stayed at the rear.

Jimmy was a mighty good riverman. Of course, he had nerve, and could do anything with a log and a peevie, and would fight at the drop of a hat—any "bully boy" would qualify there—but he also had judgment. He knew how to use the water, how to recognize the key log of jams, where to place his men—in short, he could get out the logs.

Now, Jimmy also knew the river from one end to the other, so he had arranged in his mind a sort of schedule for the twenty days. Forty-eight hours for the roll-ways; a day and a half for the upper rapid; three days into the dam pond; one day to sluice the drive through the dam; three days to the crossing, and so on. If everything went well, he could do it, but there could be no hitches in the programme.

Even from this imperfect fragment of the schedule the inexperienced might imagine that Jimmy had allowed an altogether disproportionate time to cover the mile or so from the upper rapid to the dam pond. As it turned out, however, he found he had not allowed enough, for at this point the river was peculiar and very trying.

The backwater of the dam extended up-stream half a mile; then occurred a rise of five feet to the mile, down the slope of which the water whirled and tumbled, only to spread out over a broad fan of gravel shallows. These shallows did the business. When the logs had bumped through the tribulations of the rapid, they seemed to insist obstinately on resting in the shallows, like a lot of wearied cattle.

The rear crew had to wade in. They heaved and pried and pushed industriously, and at the end of it had the satisfaction of seeing a single log slide reluctantly into the current. Sometimes a dozen of them would clamp their peevies on either side, and by sheer brute force carry the stick to deep water. When you reflect that there were over 40,000 pieces in the drive, and that a good 50 per cent of them balked below the rapids, you can see that the rear crew had its work cut out for it.

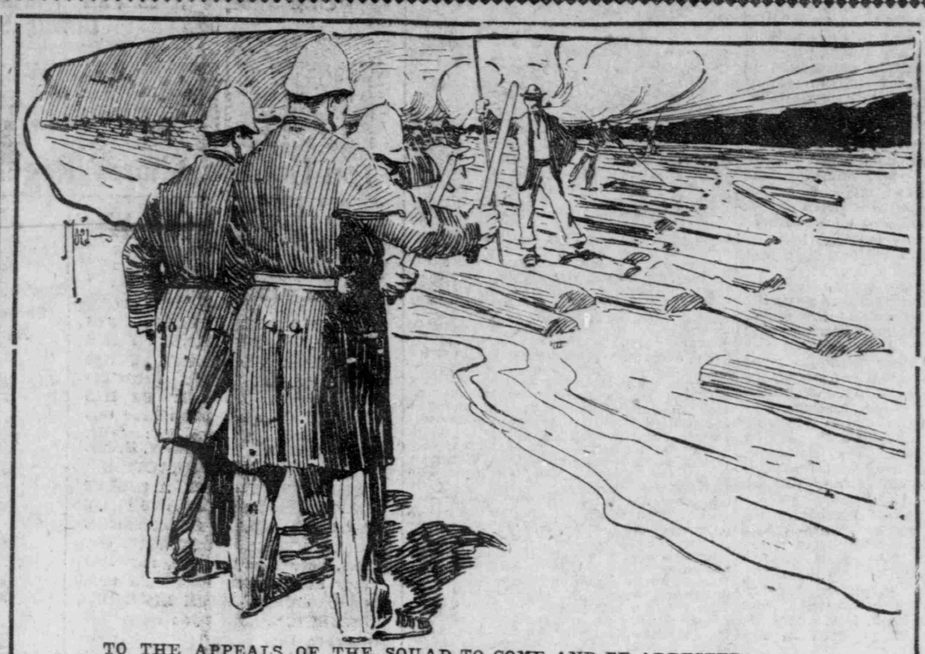
Jimmy's allotted three days were almost gone, and his job had not advanced beyond the third of completion. McGann, the sluice boss, did a little figuring.

"She'll hang over thim twinty days," he confided to Jimmy. "Shure!"

Jimmy replied not a word, but puffed piston-like smoke from his pipe. McGann shrugged in Celtic despair.

But the little man had been figuring, too, and his arrangements were more elaborate and more nearly complete than McGann suspected. That very morning he sauntered leisurely out over the rear logs, his hands in his pockets. Every once in a while he stopped to utter a few low-voiced comments to one or another of the men. The person addressed first looked extremely astonished, then shouldered his peevie and started for camp, leaving the diminished rear crew a prey to curiosity. Soon the word went about, "Day and night work," they whispered, though it was a little difficult to see the difference in ultimate effectiveness between a half crew working all the time and a whole crew working half the time.

About this stage Daly began to worry. He took the train to Grand Rapids, anxiety written deep in his brows. When he saw the little inadequate crew pecking in a futile fashion at the logs winged out over the shallows, he swore fervidly and sought Jimmy.



TO THE APPEALS OF THE SQUAD TO COME AND BE ARRESTED JIMMY PAID NOT THE SLIGHTEST ATTENTION.

Jimmy appeared calm.

"We'll get 'em out all right, Mr. Daly," said he.

"Get 'em out!" growled Daly. "Sure! But when? We ain't got all summer this season. Those logs have got to hit our boom in fourteen days or they're no good to us!"

"You'll have 'em," assured Jimmy.

Such talk made Daly tired, and he said so.

"Why, it'll take you a week to get her over those infernal shallows," he concluded. "You got to get more men, Jimmy."

"I've tried," answered the boss. "They ain't no more men to be had."

"Suffering Moses!" groaned the owner. "It means the loss of a $50,000 contract to me. "You needn't tell me. I've been on the river all my life. I know you can't get them off inside of a week."

"I'll have 'em off tomorrow morning, but it'll cost a little something," asserted Jimmy calmly. Daly stared to see if the man was not crazy. Then he retired in disgust to the city, where he began to adjust his ideas to a loss on his contract.

At sundown the rear crew quit work, and swarmed to the white encampment of tents on the river bank. There they hung wet clothes over a big skeleton framework built around a monster fire and ate a dozen eggs apiece as a side dish to supper and smoked pipes of strong "Peerless" tobacco and swapped yarns and sang songs and asked questions. To the latter they received no satisfactory replies. The crew that had been laid off knew nothing. It supposed it was to go to work after supper. After supper, however, Jimmy told it to turn in and get a little more sleep. It did turn in, and speedily forgot to puzzle.

At midnight Jimmy entered the big tent quietly with a lantern, touching each of the fresh men on the shoulder. They arose without comment and followed him outside. There they were given tools. Then the little band defiled silently down river under the stars. Jimmy led them, his hands deep in his pockets, puffing white steam clouds at regular intervals from his "meerschaum" pipe. After twenty minutes they struck the waterworks, then the board walk of Canal street. The word passed back for silence. Near the Oriole factory their leader suddenly dodged behind the piles of sawed lumber, motioning them to haste. A moment later a fat and dignified officer passed swinging his club. After the policeman had gone, Jimmy again took up his march at the head of a crew of men now thoroughly aroused to the fact that something unusual was afoot.

Soon a faint roar lifted the night silence. They crossed Fairbanks street, and a moment after stood at one end of the power dam.

The long, smooth water shot over, like fluid steel, silent and inevitable, mirroring distorted flashes that were the stars. Below, it broke in white turmoil, shouting defiance at the calm velvet rush above. Ten seconds later the current was broken. A man, his heels caught against the combing, midleg in water, was braced back at the exact angle to withstand the rush. Two other men passed down to him a short, heavy timber. A third, plunging his arms and shoulders into the liquid, nailed it home with heavy, inaudible strokes. As thought by magic a second timber braced the first, bolted solidly through the sockets already cut for it. The workers moved on eight feet, then another eight, then another. More men entered the water to pass the timbers. A row of heavy slanted supports grew out from the shoulder of the dam, dividing the waters into long, arrow-shaped furrows of light. At 12:30 o'clock Tom Clute was swept over the dam into the eddy. He swam ashore. Purdy took his place.

When the supports had reached out over half of the river's span, and the water was dotted with the shoulders of men gracefully slanted against the current, Jimmy gave orders to begin placing the flash-boards. Heavy planks were at once slid across the supports, where the weight of the racing water at once clamped them fast. The smooth, quiet river, interrupted at last, murmured and snarled and eddied back, only to rush with increased vehemence around the end of the rapidly growing obstruction.

The policeman passing back and forth on Canal street heard no sound of the labor going on. If he had been an observant policeman he would have noted an ever-changing tone in the volume of sound roaring up from the eddy below the dam. After a time even he remarked on a certain obvious phenomenon.

"Sure," said he, "now that's funny."

He listened a moment, then passed on. The vagaries of the river were, after all, nothing to him. He belonged on Canal street, East Side; and Canal street, East Side, seemed peaceful.

The river had fallen abruptly silent. The last of Jimmy's flash-boards was in place. Back in the sleeping town the clock in Pierce's tower struck 2.

Jimmy and his men having thus raised the level of the dam a good three feet, emerged dripping from the west side canal, and cheerfully took their way northward to where, in the chilly dawn, their comrades were sleeping. As they passed the riffles they paused. A heavy grumbling issued from the logs jammed there, a grumbling brutish and sullen, as though the reluctant animals were beginning to stir. The water had already banked up from the raised dam.

Of course, the affair, from a river driver's standpoint, at once became exceedingly simple. The slumbering twenty were aroused to astonished drowsiness. By 3, just as the dawn was beginning to streak the east, the regular clank, clank, click of the peevish proclaimed that due advantage of the high water was being seized. From then until 6 was a matter of three hours more.

A great deal can be accomplished in three hours with flood water. The last little jam "pulled" just about the time the first citizen of the west side discovered that his cellar was full of water. When that startled freeman opened up the front door to see what was up he uttered a tremendous ejaculation; and so, shortly, came to the construction of a raft.

Well, the newspapers got out extras with scare heads about "Outrages" and "High-handed Lawlessness;" and factory owners by the canals raised up their voices in bitterness over flooded firerooms; and property owners of perishable cellar goods howled of damage suits; and the ordinary citizen took to bailing out the hollow places of his domain. Toward 9 o'clock—after the first excitement had died and the flash-boards had been indignantly yanked from their illegal places—a squad of police went out to hunt up the malefactor. The latter they discovered on a boom pole directing the sluicing. From this position he declined to stir. One fat policeman ventured a toppling yard or so on the floating timber, threw his shaky hands aloft, and with a mighty effort regained the shore, where he sat down panting.

To the appeals of the squad to come and be arrested Jimmy paid not the slightest attention. He puffed periodically on his "meerschaum" and directed the sluicing. Through the twenty-four-foot gate about a million an hour passed. Thus it came about that a little after noon Jimmy stepped peaceably ashore and delivered himself up.

"You won't have no more trouble below," he observed to McGann, his lieutenant, watching reflectively the last log as it shot through the gate. "Just tie right into her and keep her a-hustling." Then he refilled his pipe, lit it and approached the expectant squad.

At the station house he was interviewed by reporters. That is, they asked questions. To only one of them did they elicit a reply.

"Didn't you know you were breaking the law?" inquired the Eagle man. "Didn't you know you'd be arrested?"

"Sure!" replied Jimmy with obvious contempt.

The next morning the court room was crowded. Jimmy pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a fine of $500 or ninety days in jail. To the surprise of everybody he fished out a tremendous roll and paid the fine. The spectators considered it remarkable that a river boss should carry such an amount. They had not been present at the interview on the boom poles between Jimmy and his principal the day before.

The latter stood near the door as the little man came out.

"Jimmy," said Mr. Daly distinctly so that everybody could hear, "I am extremely sorry to see you in this trouble, but perhaps it may prove a lesson to you. Next time you must understand that you are not supposed to exceed your instructions."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy meekly. "Do you think you will get the logs in time, Mr. Daly?"

Thus did the astute Daly publicly disclaim liability.

They looked at each other steadily. Then for the first and only time the black and white mask of Jimmy's inscrutability melted away. In his left eye appeared a faint glimmer. Then the left eyelid slowly descended.

THE OLD SPORT-- He Returns to Utah to Take Part in the State Campaign. By Joel L. Priest.

"COULDN'T stand it away from you any longer, old son," said the Old Sport. Johnny was so astonished he nearly dropped the cracked bottle, and that would have been a calamity too great for words.

"Where you been, Sport?" he asked, as he carefully wiped his hands on a bar towel and stretched one of them across the counter. "I ain't seen you for so dern long I been thinkin' you'd reached your case day."

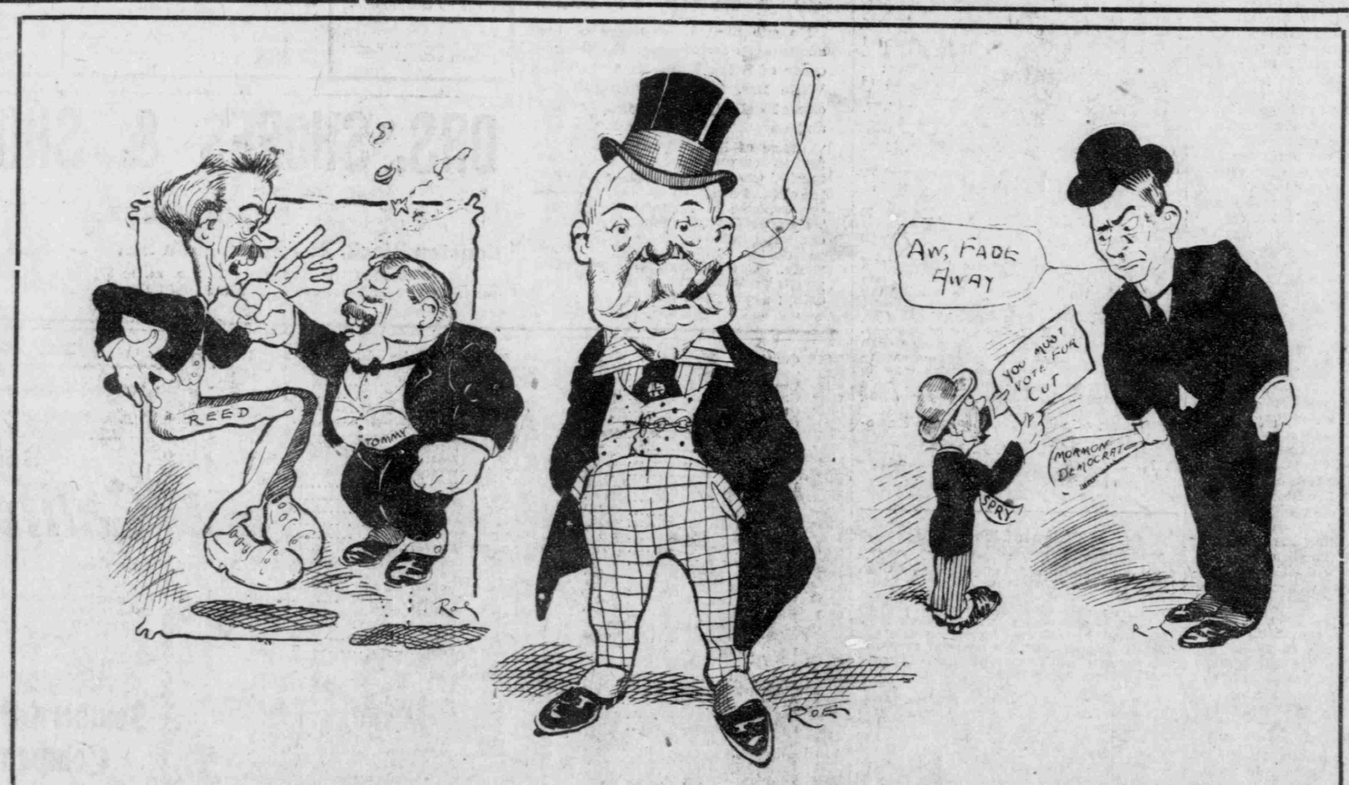
"Who, me? Well, I guess not, son," was the reply. "I ain't so old yet but what I smelleth the battle from afar off an' sayeth among the case cards, ha, ha, as the feller said. Where I been ain't of no more importance than a stud game booster on a tax list. The thing we'er considerin' now is that here I am, an' here I'm goin' to stay till the box is turned in this here political game Reed's dealin'.

"Yep, Reed sends for me. Tickledest man you ever saw when he laid his lamps on me over at hearquarters. Says to Spry, he says, 'Brother Spry, consider yourself the most insignficant feature of the discard from this time hence,' he says. 'Brother Sport,' he says, 'will set in the lookout chair whilst I deals. You will hereafter be a mere ornament, Brother Spry,' he says, 'which is some complimentary an' farfetched as a description, too, Brother Spry,' he says, 'because when it comes to the correspondin' marks an' brands you're shy, Brother Spry,' he says.

"So Reed takes me into the innerest of the inner rooms, tellin' Brother Spry that if Tom Kearns came to tell him he's out, an' if Joe Lippman calls tell him he's sorry, but he can't see no way to fix it so's to hold that United States attorney's job for him. When we gets settled Reed begins to tell me his troubles. He says it's awful the way people are tryin' to make trouble for him.

"'Brother Sport,' he says, 'the time has come when I got to yell for help. They're dealin' to me off the bottom an' off the top an' out of the middle of the deck, an' dern it, I got to act as if I liked it. I'm goin' to be whipsawed, shore, unless somethin' happens. Already,' he says, 'I can feel my pore frame bumpin' down the hard stone steps of the Capitol. If I can't land Cut I'm down an' out, Sport,' he says, 'down an' out.'

"'Who is this here Cut Reed?' I says. 'Does he play the bank, does he deal anywhere, is he anything like what a gent ought to be before he's got a license to be governor?'



"'It's this way, Brother Sport,' says Reed. 'Cut ain't nothin' to nobody. He's what they call a horrible example. I picks him up an' nominates him just by way of showin' what I could do in this fair land of Utah when I set down to it. It's a cinch, Sport,' he says, 'that if I can nominate Cut I can nominate anybody, so I picks Cut out an' sets him above his fellers. We jump the first hurdle all right, but this here thing has developed into an obstacle race with irresistible forces buttin' up agin immovable bodies at every spot in the road.'

"'Not bein' learned in the sciences, John, I don't pretend to understand Reed's heavy language. I notes it down an' I gives it to you as he deals it. 'The first obstacle,' he says, 'is Tom. I'm thinkin' I got Tom in a place where he's got to make good or lose his ante. Saunterin' through my brain is the hunch that Tom'd ruther go back to the United States senate than have a duly countersigned pass through the pearly gates,' he says.

"'It occurs to me that, with the new legislater comin' up,' he says, 'Tom 'll stay in line for Cut even if he's one solid blister from his head to his toes. Did he stay, Brother Sport?' he says. 'Well, the gong taps. Tom fiddles for an openin' an' when he gets it he leads with a church influence jolt. I counters with a resolution readin' Tom's paper out of the party. He crosses me with this here Liberal play an' now, Brother Sport,' he says, 'though I'm still smilin' I'm some groggy.'

"'Brother Spry claims he'll get Cut two Mormon Democratic votes for every Gentile vote he loses. I know how Brother Spry thinks he's goin' to do it—ain't I a United States senator?—but with this here senate committee comin' to Utah in about seven weeks it seems to me that Brother Spry'd better not buy no stack in that game. If I got a outside gamblin' chance to hold on to my seat, then Brother Spry better not make no more of them funny cracks. If I ain't, I don't give a dern how many he makes.'

"'But, Reed,' I says. 'Is it a cinch Brother Spry can get these here Mormon Democratic votes?'

"'Maybe so, Brother Sport—ain't I a United States senator?'—he says, 'but I'm afraid Brother Spry overplays his hand when he makes that talk. When you goes out an' says to a man you're goin' to vote him the way you want him to vote, not the way he wants to vote, you're liable to rile him an' make him so sot in his ways that he'll vote as he cussed pleases.

"'So I've sent for you, Sport,' he says, 'to give me a lift. An' I wants you to assist in the campaign. You shorely ain't no Liberal?' he says, some sweaty.

"'I drinks liberal, Reed,' I says, 'an' I don't play 'em none too close to my vest in a honest game,' I says, 'but I votes like I lickers, an' that's straight. I've helped Tom in days gone by when Tom was travelin' in pretty much the same sort of company you hives with. Looks like I ought to be able to stack up with you in this game, an if you gives me the tip on what I got to do, why, I'm after it like a busted gambler after a sleeper on the layout.'

"'Thanks, old friend,' says Reed. 'I knowed you'd be with me. I ain't changed none. It's Tom that's changed. An' you ain't changed none, either, since the good old days. I'll be saved now.' I left him there, with his eyes leakin', an' come right over here."

"Are you reely goin' to boost Reed's game, Sport?" asked Johnny.

"Son, son," was the reply. "In the game of politics you're a babe an' a sucklin' from the mouth of which proceedeth no wisdom, as the feller said. How can I tell whether I'm goin' to boost Reed or not until after Jodey Lippman and Tom have seen me?"

THE COSSACKS--Expert Riders, Crack Swordsmen and Good All Around Soldiers.

DURING the so-called Boxer war in China in the summer of 1900 I saw a little of the Russian Cossacks, says a writer in the Wethersfield, Conn., Record. True historians never depart from facts. They describe persons and things in general as they really exist. Novelists sometimes draw on their imagination, consequently it may be said that those brilliant writers (or any one of them) who have described the Cossacks as being tall, lithe, energetic and formidable-looking soldiers were writers of fiction and not of facts, unless it so happened that they saw them through an excellent pair of field glasses while on the battlefield.

The average Cossack, while a trifle taller than the ordinary Russian, would be classed as a small man in the United States army; but, while not great of stature, they are wiry and quick as a flash, and, taken as a whole, would seem to be a jolly, good-natured and indifferent sort of people.

The uniform worn by the Cossack who served in the Chinese relief expedition was white cotton blouse, white cap and dark trousers tucked into high-topped boots. His implements of war were a long curved sword (or shaska) and rifle, the latter slung diagonally across his back, muzzle up. In addition to this the men in the front rank carried a dangerous looking lance nine feet long.

His mount was a bony little creature about as large as our western cow-pony and said to have great endurance. The latter I can vouch for. One of these little scavengers would thrive on stuff that would be repulsive even to a billygoat. One of them will chew on a piece of rope as contentedly as though it was standing behind a bunch of hay, and in absence of more palatable food would eat its saddle and trappings if permitted to do so. In referring to them one writer has said that "one squadron in Pekin, finding itself out of forage, fed its horses the wisdom of Chinese sages, with rice paper straw leaves of the tomes of an imperial library."

The Cossack, too, knows how to take care of himself. In passing through a country he never overlooks anything that he may have use for. From these tribes alone the czar can mobilize an immense army, besides leaving a reserve at home to guard the frontier. It is said he can put 275,000 Cossacks in the field. This number is divided into 155 regiments of cavalry and thirty-eight horse batteries.

While cavalry tactics are not unknown to the Cossacks, they are not intended for "shock action" against heavy cavalry. They have a formation of their own called the "lava." One of its many parts is this: Should the enemy appear in solid formation the Cossacks throw out a thin line and lure him on. Should he charge in solid formation the Cossacks scatter and swarm around his flank, rally quickly, and if an opportunity presents itself, deal a sudden and decisive blow.

There can be no question as to the Cossack's ability as a fighter. He is an expert rider and a crack swordsman, a good all around soldier, and will risk his life for the czar whenever called upon to do so.

Cossacks look their best when drawn up in regimental formation on the parade ground, for horses and riders are almost of an equal height and well drilled in their peculiar tactics. But they look like ten-year-old boys on the backs of ponies, so to speak, by the side of Uncle Sam's brawny troopers astride of their fine mounts. No one knows this better than the Cossack himself. It was noticeable while our cavalry troops of the Sixth were stationed at Tien Tsin how the Cossacks always avoided a meeting of this kind unless, indeed, it be a straggler who was out on a lark and had more vodka aboard than was good for him. In some respects the Cossacks are not unlike the wandering gypsies. In any country they might be taken for the other, and they have the same nomadic inclinations. While in China they were continually on the march back and forth along the Peiho river; but where they went to or came from was a problem not easy to solve.

Thirty-six hours after the time set for the allies to draw their forces from Pekin 25,000 Cossacks had passed out of that walled city, but when they left and where they went to no one seemed to know.

In past warfare the Cossacks have done much to swell their little father's (the czar's) vast dominions. He wants more; they are struggling to get it for him; they may succeed, but never before perhaps have they measured swords with so determined, valiant and persistent a foe as are those wily little men from the Land of the Rising Sun.

Circumventing Fate.

The palmist again studied the lines in the young man's hand.

"You will have a long life, sir," she said.

"Well, that's some comfort."

"Yes," she went on; "your line of life, as we call it, has a break in it, about the middle, but I can see that you have repaired it for my inspection by creasing it with your fingernail or the back of a knife blade, or something of the kind. A man that will do that will be shrewd enough to cheat death in some way or other when his time comes. Fifty cents, please."